



A project co-funded by the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) and the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), *Research Matters* (RM) supports the effective exchange and translation of sound and innovative research findings among a wide range of research-users and decision makers. This newsletter is published semiannually and contains updates about RM's projects, activities and products; with a specific focus on a topic that we believe is of interest to our partners. This current issue concentrates on **Designing a Communications Strategy** (see reverse).

## PARTNER **ACHIEVEMENTS!**

- ✦ The **Municipal Services Project**'s new interactive website is live! ([www.municipalservices.org](http://www.municipalservices.org)) Surf the pages for multimedia material and engage in discussions of alternative forms of health, water and electricity service delivery. *Translation of the website is already underway!*
- ✦ **Health Research Web** – This wiki-like health research platform was officially launched at the Global Forum for Health Research in Havana, Cuba Nov 09. Go to [www.healthresearchweb.org](http://www.healthresearchweb.org) to become a part of it.
- ✦ The **EQUINET** radio spots and debates on fair financing for health were featured on the African Labour Radio Project and on South Africa FM in September/October '09:
  - 'Public healthcare financing' <http://www.equinet africa.org/bibl/docs/alrpfinoct2009.mp3>
  - *Healthcare financing: The state of healthcare and the working class* <http://www.equinet africa.org/bibl/docs/audiodump.mp3>
- ✦ Many of **WHO EVIPnet Africa**'s ten African countries (Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Ethiopia, Mozambique, Zambia and REACH-Policy: Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania) have been producing policy briefs and engaging in National Policy Dialogues – some of which have led to government action.
- ✦ **ZAMFOHR** –Up, up and away! RM's long time partner ZAMFOHR has now acquired its wings and is on its way to being Zambia's one and only Knowledge Translation hub

Podcasts, Briefing notes, Thinkpieces, Videos, Toolkits, Conference Reports, Mapping Tools... **Coming soon:** a revised and revamped KT toolkit

RM Web Site Updates @ [www.research-matters.net](http://www.research-matters.net)

## **NEW INITIATIVES**

The Ifakara Health Institute in Tanzania, with RM support, is examining the extent to which "The National Expansion of **TEHIP** Tools and Strategies through Zonal Rollout (NETTS/ZORO)" has taken place around the country and what has been learned to date about this national scale up. High level meetings with ministry officials and the Chief Medical Officer have already led to renewed action on the roll-out, including its clear articulation in the medium term expenditure framework.

*Sound Evidence, Healthy Debates - promoting research evidence to influence health services and policy through media.* RM partners with **BBC World Service Trust's** Kimasomaso programme to a) strengthen the interaction and communication between health researchers and a wide range of research-users, in the Swahili-speaking region, in order to inform health policy and service delivery b) stimulate debate between youth and policy makers c) enhance researchers' communications skills.

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# Designing a Communications Strategy

In this age of unparalleled choice, communications is committed above all to the principle of *broadcasting differences*: here's why our idea – in this great sea of ideas – really matters. Here's what separates our findings from all the others. Here's what makes our approach and our organization unique. And here's how our ideas can help you make a decision – whether you're choosing between two pairs of shoes or two policy options.

While it may be easier to think about communications in terms of products, it's more constructive to think in terms of an ongoing and iterative *process*. A communications strategy is not the glue between different communications products: it is a means of elaborating how we network, participate, and interact with the world. Good communications reflect a two-way dialogue, where we listen, design and deliver *audience-informed* strategies, and then gather feedback to assess our impact.

Every organization requires a dynamic communications strategy. As dedicated KTers, we know that if we want to broadcast our difference, if we want to influence decisions, we must learn how to integrate communications into everything we do. Instead of supporting the production of random products tied to specific outputs (e.g. a paper summarizing research findings), organizations need to see communications as a vehicle that is not only helpful or required but *essential to achieving core goals*.

## The Essential Elements

In this chapter, we discuss the rudiments of a communications strategy through ten key components designed to expand our communications thinking:

**Review** – how effective have previous communications been?

**Objective** – what do we want our communications to achieve?

**Audience** – who is our audience and what information do they need to act upon our message? Do we have a primary and a secondary audience?

**Message** – what is our message? Do we have one message for multiple audiences or multiple messages for multiple audiences?

**Basket** – what kinds of “products” best capture and deliver our messages?

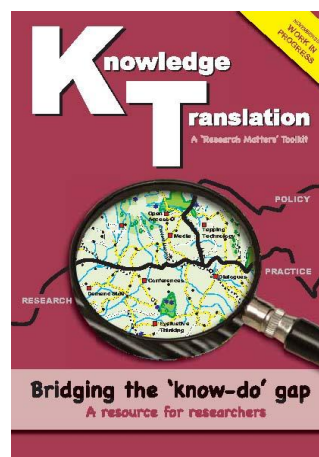
**Channels** – what channels will we use to disseminate our products?

**Resources** – what kind of skills and budget do we have for this?

**Timing** – would a staged strategy work? What special opportunities might arise?

**Brand** – how can we ensure that we're broadcasting the “right” message?

**Feedback** – how will we know when our communications strategy is 100% successful? What will have changed?



To learn more on *Chapter 6 Designing a communications strategy* and other Knowledge Translation Strategies, visit the KT toolkit online - its free !

[www.idrc.ca/rm\\_kt\\_toolkit](http://www.idrc.ca/rm_kt_toolkit)

More on communication strategies can also be found in IDRC's communications toolkit at: [http://www.idrc.ca/en/ev-131735-201-1-DO\\_TOPIC.html](http://www.idrc.ca/en/ev-131735-201-1-DO_TOPIC.html)